

He Bangs The Drums

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Summary:

"Richie flew down the street on his bike, heart thumping, face aching with smiling. He'd never been in such a good mood on a Monday morning, or any morning. But today was different. Today was The Day After, the day after the world became better, brighter, lighter, like someone turned up the sound and sharpened the image of what Richie saw around him. The sun shined brighter, his bike seemed to go faster, even the air was easier to breathe."

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Author's Note:

uuh i kinda hate this but i wanted to write something
for reddie so Here You Go
i swear i have like five better ideas for reddie fics
and this one got away from what i originally wanted
to write in a big way but never mind
also idk when she bangs the drums was released or
whether it would be on the radio in 1990 or
whenever i'm setting this but the song really reminds
me of reddie so don't call me out
enjoy!

Richie flew down the street on his bike, heart thumping, face aching with smiling. He'd never been in such a good mood on a Monday morning, or any morning. But today was different. Today was The Day After, the day after the world became better, brighter, lighter, like someone turned up the sound and sharpened the image of what Richie saw around him. The sun shined brighter, his bike seemed to go faster, even the air was easier to breathe. The song that had been playing as he left the house was stuck in his head on repeat, the words taking on new meaning.

Through the early morning sun

I can see her, here she comes

She bangs the drums

Have you seen her, have you heard

The way she plays, I have no words

To describe the way I feel

Nothing, not even the school building looming in the distance, could bring him down. He stopped with a swerve and a squeal of brakes, leant the bike against a wall instead of at the stands, and glanced

around; for his friends, yes, but mostly for Eddie. The anticipation of seeing him again after Sunday drove him nuts, and he knew it was pathetic to get so excited about seeing a guy you just saw *barely ten hours ago*, *Richie*, *chill out*, but he couldn't help it.

"Hey. Why are you just standing there?"

And then he was there, and all the air went away again.

"Eddie. Hey. Morning." The words were hard to get out. Richie was grinning again, involuntarily, so wide it hurt.

Eddie smiled back, a little shyly. He'd spent all last night awake, worrying about how this would go wrong, how Richie might change his mind, or his mom would find out, or the kids at school, or anyone at all would find out and their lives would be ruined, or the rest of the Losers would find out but they wouldn't understand, they'd get kicked out of the group, or...

"Eds? You okay?"

"Yeah, I'm...I'm fine." Eddie smiled shakily. "Don't call me that." His heartbeat slowed down as he looked at Richie, the way his hair caught the sunlight and strands of it lit up, copper and gold in the rich dark waves, the way his glasses flashed as he turned his head. It would be okay. It would be okay. No matter what happened, Richie was there, and Eddie could get through anything so long as that much was true.

Richie couldn't stop staring. He'd never really looked at Eddie, not really, never noticed how dark his eyes were, or how adorable it was that he had to look up at Richie through his lashes like that, or how flushed his cheeks got in the cool morning air. Holy shit, this boy was turning him into a drooling idiot.

"What are you looking at?"

"Just how hideously ugly you are. It's pretty distracting."

Eddie pushed him playfully, the tension in his chest dissolving. "Shut up, trashmouth."

They walked to homeroom alone together, side by side, hands just brushing. Neither of them brought up the previous night, alone in Richie's room watching *A Nightmare On Elm Street* on VHS, what had happened when Richie started tickling Eddie and it turned into a play-fight until, finally, Eddie pinned Richie on the bed, spilled popcorn all over the bedspread, their faces so close, able to count every freckle, hot breath on each others cheeks. Neither of them said a word. They didn't have to. When Eddie leaned down and brushed his lips against Richie's so, so softly, he got it completely.

Richie found himself daydreaming about it all day, not that he had ever paid that much attention in class before. His teachers were just grateful he wasn't being disruptive for once, though he did get some strange glances from his friends.

"Richie? You're being uncharacteristically non-hyper-verbal."

"Huh?"

Stan waved a hand in front of Richie's face as they walked to Math, weaving through the crowds of kids. "Hello, this is ground control to Captain Tozier, everything alright up there?"

"Okay, I get it, I'm present."

"Good. So we're still on for the quarry tonight? Mike said he could come too, so it's a full house."

"I, uh, I dunno. I said I'd do something with Eddie." He felt his face grow hot and prayed Stan wouldn't notice.

"What?"

"Uh...I said I'd help him study." In his head, Richie smacked his palm to his forehead. Him, helping Eddie *study*? On what planet?

"Seriously?" Stan gave him a suspicious sideways glance. "Well...we could come round to Eddie's later and you could both come down with us. I think Bill promised his mom he'd help box up Georgie's things, so he'll be late out anyway."

Richie began to sense that Stan wasn't gonna let him or Eddie blow

the others off again. They'd been hanging out together, just the two of them, more and more lately; clearly they weren't as slick as they thought. Never mind, at least they could be alone for an hour or so. Honestly, even the thought of that brief time sent Richie's head spinning. His feelings for Eddie had always been this intense, but now that he knew Eddie felt the same...or did he? They hadn't really talked about how they felt. Was he getting too serious too fast? They'd only kissed once, and then Eddie had rushed off, saying he needed to get back to his mom before she freaked, which was probably true...but what if Eddie had just said that to get out of there? What if it'd had just been a mistake, or an experiment, and now Eddie wanted to back out? Richie zoned out again as Stan's voice became white noise, his heart thumping, palms pricking with sweat.

The ring of the final bell had never seemed so exhilarating or so terrifying. The Losers split up, finalizing agreements to meet at the quarry at 5:45 to hang out, gliding home with practised grace on their bikes. Richie went at a slower, lazier pace than his normal frenetic sprint to allow Eddie to keep up. They fell into a rhythm, side by side, wobbling and wheeling like the birds in the sky above them. The world was silent apart from the smooth tick of the wheels and their breathing. At Eddie's house, through the screen door, the obligatory tongue-in-cheek greeting to his mom met with her frosty glare, then up the stairs and into his room. Richie's hands were shaking.

Eddie sat down on the bed.

"So, er..." His voice was wobbly. Richie braced himself for the inevitable rejection. "...About last night."

"You don't have to say anything." Richie's voice seemed to be coming from someone else. "I get it."

"You...you do?"

"Yeah." *Don't let your voice crack, don't cry, hold it together, goddamn it!* "It was a mistake, or whatever. You didn't mean to do it. It's okay, it's fine, I didn't take it like that anyway." The words were coming out too fast now, he couldn't stop them. "I'm not -" He was about to

say *I'm not gay*, but the words stuck in his throat. "I'm not bothered." He let the words hang in the air as Eddie stood, frowning.

"What do you mean?" His voice was so soft. Richie stared at the carpet, wishing he was dead. How could he have been so happy this morning, and so wretched now? "It wasn't a mistake."

"Then why did – why did you –"

"Why did I kiss you?" Richie kept looking at the carpet, not daring to breathe.

"Because..." Eddie took a deep breath, tried to calm his racing heartbeat and ignored the little voice that said *cardiac arrest, pulmonary embolism, stroke*. "Because I like you. Like. *Like* you, like you."

Richie looked up through his flop of dark hair, blinking huge eyes behind his glasses. "What?"

"Oh my God, Tozier," Eddie muttered under his breath. His feet carried him across the room in two strides and he cupped Richie's face and pressed his lips quickly and clumsily to his. When they pulled apart, Richie stared at him dumbly, face in flames. "Get it?" Eddie said, voice soft and low.

"Uh-uh. Got it." Fireworks were going off in Richie's chest, but all he could do was stand there as Eddie grinned, went up on his tiptoes, and kissed Richie again. And again, and again, and -

"Okay, okay. Hold up." Richie pulled back from Eddie, adjusted his glasses, flustered. "You don't think we're – I mean, are you – are you sure you're okay? Y'know, with all the – we're not going too fast, d'you think?"

"Richie, we've kissed -" Eddie paused to count on his fingers. "One, two three, four, five...six times. As of two seconds ago. Standing up, without tongue. You're always going on about all the stuff you've done with girls, why -"

"I haven't," Richie blurted. "Done anything. With anyone." *Jesus fuck, Tozier, stop talking! Now!* "And this is different, anyways, this is...you.

And I feel so much for you, fucking hell, Eddie...I don't wanna freak you out, or go too far, or..." Richie cringed, begging himself to shut up. Eddie blinked at him.

"It's okay. It's fine. You can't freak me out." Eddie shook his head, smiling. "What can I say to get you to believe that I really want you as much as you want me?"

"Nothing." Richie shot him a wobbly grin. "Maybe you should try kissing me again."

"Shut up, Tozier."

"Make m-" The end of his sentence was cut off by Eddie's mouth on his again, warm and insistent.

It felt like no time at all had passed when they heard the shrill ring of the bikes outside. Richie and Eddie were laid on Eddie's bed, side by side. They were barely touching, but it was almost too much for Richie anyway. Every time their lips met, shyly at first and then getting bolder as time wore on, Richie's brain would not shut up. *Eddie likes you he's kissing you he's not grossed out by you you're on his bed his hands are in your hair -*

BRINNG.

"Hey, ladies! Stop sucking face and get out h - oh, I'm so sorry Ms. Kaspbrak, yes we'll be quieter -" The end of Bev's sentence was lost as her voice lowered from the scream she'd been using to yell through the window to conversation volume, trying to persuade Eddie's mom not to call the cops. Eddie and Richie bolted upright, faces glowing.

"Oh, fuck. You think she saw us through the window!?"

"No way, you can't see onto my bed from the street...at least I don't think you can..." They scrambled off the bed in a panic. Eddie poked his head out the half open window. Below, the rest of the Losers were gathered on their bikes in a rough semi-circle, craning their necks to look at the window.

"H-hey, Eddie. You and Richie coming to the quarry?" Bill called up.

"Yeah, sure, give us a second," Eddie replied, smacking his head as he pulled it back through hastily.

"Ow, that hurt -"

"You okay?" Richie asked, rushing over with concern.

"Yeah, I'm fine really. Wow, I totally forgot we agreed to hang out with them."

"Me too. I think Stan's on to us."

"Seriously!?" Eddie's voice grew slightly shrill.

"Well, not *on* to us exactly, but he's definitely suspicious. We can't keep blowing them off." Richie rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly.

"You think maybe we should tell them about us?"

"Whoa, there, Eddie Spaghetti. Do we even know about *us* yet?"

"Okay, good point. What if they guess, though?"

"Eds, if I were them, I'd think we'd been abducted by aliens before the idea of us making out in secret even entered my head."

Ms. Kaspbrak was not pleased to allow her son out, but Richie was impressed to see Eddie asserting himself over her with confidence.

"It's just for a couple hours, Mom. I'll be careful."

"But, Eddie, baby, you're so flushed, are you sure you're not -"

"*Mom*. I'm going. I'll be back in plenty of time for bed, so just relax, okay? Come on, Richie." Eddie took Richie's hand and pulled him towards the door.

"Bye, Ms. Kaspbrak." Richie got another glare in reply.

The Losers peddled in a ragged group, swerving over the road and racing each other for stretches. They halted outside the drug store to grab sweets and drinks to take down to the quarry, and Eddie and

Richie hung back, claiming they weren't hungry and anyway, they were flat broke. The others went inside, laughing at something Mike said, as Eddie and Richie straddled their bikes and waited.

"Think they know?" Eddie peered after his friends anxiously.

"What d'you think gave it away? Was I peddling too *gayly*?" Richie teased him.

"Shut up, I'm serious."

"No, Eds, they don't know. How could they? It's not like I made out with you right in front of them like *this* -" Richie dropped his bike and leaned in quickly to plant a kiss on Eddie's lips.

Eddie jumped backwards. "*Richie!* What if someone sees?"

"You see anyone around here?" The street was deserted. Eddie ran his hand through his hair.

"The others are right in there. If they come out -"

"They won't." Richie felt a reckless urge thrill through him. He pulled Eddie closer by his shirt and kissed him again, joy rising in him. He loved the way Eddie blushed and shook his head and muttered "*Gross,*" but moved closer anyway, the way he let his hand sit lightly on Richie's hip, the warmth seeping through his shirt right into his bloodstream, the way -

"What are you guys *doing*?"

They sprang apart. Behind them, the Losers Club stood in the doorway of the drug store, all wearing matching expressions of shock.

"Oh, er, hey guys." Richie was pretty sure this was what an out of body experience felt like. "We were just, er..." He'd had never been lost for words in his life. Until now.

"Oh my God, you guys, I was just joking earlier," Bev smirked. "I didn't think you were really making out."

“Everything makes sense now,” Stan murmured, shell-shocked. “The sneaking around, the blowing us off to hang out together...all this time...”

“Not *all* this time!” Richie protested, horrified. “Just...since yesterday...”

“W-wow,” Bill said uncertainly. “Um...congrats, I guess?”

“Yeah,” said Mike, nodding firmly. “It’s nice. Congrats.”

Richie wanted to die. It didn’t feel *nice*, it felt fucking mortifying. Stan was still staring at them like they’d dropped from space, Bev was hiding her giggles behind her hand, and Ben looked almost as embarrassed as Richie and Eddie.

Eddie grabbed his inhaler from his bag and took a sharp breath from it, heart racing. The awkward silence lengthened as they stood there, the tension growing stronger like a rubber band being stretched until it finally snapped, and so did Eddie.

“I can’t take this any more! Just say that you hate us or that you think it’s gross and go!”

“W-what? We don’t t-think that, Eddie,” Bill protested.

“Yeah, it’s fine!” said Ben, finally finding his words.

“It’s more than fine. It’s adorable,” Bev grinned, leaning in to ruffle Eddie’s hair. He huffed and glared at her, but his heart rate eased up a little.

“You know what I think, live and let live,” Mike shrugged. “It’s okay with me too.”

“I actually do think it’s disgusting, but only because you picked Richie. Seriously, dude?” Stan said in a deadpan tone. Richie punched him on the arm, but began to smile, his own embarrassment fading as his friends teased him.

“Come on, what are we still standing here for? The show’s over, let’s go if we’re going,” Richie announced, swinging his leg over his bike.

“Stop trying to change the subject, Tozier, we want details!” Bev joked, but they all mounted their bikes anyway and as a group, sped off towards the quarry. Richie and Eddie rode side by side, hearts both lighter than they had been in a long time. As they rode, Richie watched Eddie, and the song from that morning came back into his head. In his head, some of the lyrics were different.

*Through the early morning sun
I can see him here he comes
He bangs the drums
Have you seen him have you heard
The way he plays there are no words
To describe the way I feel
How could it ever come to pass*

He'll be the first, he'll be the last

To describe the way I feel

The way I feel